

VZCZCXRO2977
OO RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHEK #1273/01 3580227
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 230227Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1611
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2784
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1145
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3175
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2561
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 001273

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/22/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: CHARGE ENGAGES KYRGYZ WHITE HOUSE OVER RFE/RL
BROADCASTS

REF: A. BISHKEK 1254

[1](#)B. BISHKEK 1222

BISHKEK 00001273 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Charge Lee Litzenberger, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: During a December 18 meeting with the Presidential Foreign Policy Advisor Ryskulov, Charge raised concerns over the suspension of RFE/RL's Kyrgyz-language programming by Kyrgyz state television and radio (KTR). Ryskulov was somewhat optimistic that RFE/RL and KTR could reach agreement on a contract extension, as long as RFE/RL would assume "legal responsibility" for the content of its programming. KTR Director Eshimkanov told the press on December 18 that RFE/RL had refused a provision in the contract accepting responsibility for "insults, humiliation, and inaccurate information" in its programming. Prague-based Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG)/International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) representative Enver Safir told us that under the current contract with KTR, RFE/RL accepts full responsibility for the content of its programming. Safir confirmed that BBG in Washington sent a letter, dated December 19, to Eshimkanov, confirming responsibility for RFE/RL programming content and requesting Eshimkanov to resume broadcasts. Post will follow up with the Presidential Administration to convey that RFE/RL considers that it already accepts full responsibility for the content of its broadcasts. End summary.

ADMINISTRATION REP OPTIMISTIC ON AGREEMENT

[1](#)2. (C) During a December 18 with Presidential Foreign Policy Advisor Islan Ryskulov, the Charge raised concerns over the suspension of RFE/RL's Kyrgyz-language programming by the Kyrgyz State Television and Radio company (KTR) (Refs A and B). Ryskulov, who appeared well briefed on the matter, was guardedly optimistic that RFE/RL and KTR could reach agreement on a contract extension. He said that under Kyrgyzstan's June 2008 media law, KTR as a broadcaster is legally responsible for ensuring that its programming content

does not violate Kyrgyz law. According to Ryskulov, KTR wants RFE/RL to take "legal responsibility" for the comments and statements made by its reporters, but not for the statements made by its guests. Charge noted that in December 15 meetings with KTR Director Eshimkanov (Ref A), IBB and RFE/RL representatives had understood Eshimkanov's demands differently, as meaning KTR wanted to censor RFE/RL broadcasts. Ryskulov suggested that any inconsistency might have been a matter of translation.

ESHIMKANOV GOES PUBLIC WITH DEMANDS

¶3. (SBU) In a December 17 press interview, Eshimkanov provided a different account of the December 15 meetings he had with IBB and RFE/RL representatives (ref A). Eshimkanov claimed he had offered Azattyk (RFE/RL's Kyrgyz-language service) to include a provision in the contract saying that RFE/RL would bear responsibility for the "insults, humiliation, and inaccurate information in their programs," but that RFE/RL had refused to accept such terms. Eshimkanov said that under Kyrgyzstan's new media law, the broadcaster would be held liable for what is broadcast, including any defamatory material in an RFE/RL program.

IBB LETTER TO ESHIMKANOV COULD SPUR NEGOTIATIONS

¶4. (C) Subsequently, Prague-based BBG/IBB representative Enver Safir told us that under the current contract with KTR, RFE/RL already accepts full responsibility for the content of its programming. Safir confirmed that BBG in Washington sent a letter, dated December 19, to Eshimkanov, confirming

BISHKEK 00001273 002.2 OF 002

responsibility for RFE/RL programming content and requesting Eshimkanov to resume broadcasts. The letter also points out that the financial issues have been resolved. In addition to requesting a resumption of broadcasts under the current contract, which expires December 31, the letter asks Eshimkanov to sign an extension of their broadcast agreement for 2009.

COMMENT

¶5. (C) The Charge will convey by letter to Presidential Foreign Policy advisor Ryskulov the information that BBG already takes full responsibility for the content of its programming and would continue to do so, and urge Ryskulov to support renewal of the contract. We will have to see whether KTR and the Administration will move to resume broadcasts or whether they will create new hurdles to overcome for RFE/RL programming on Kyrgyz state television and radio channels.
LITZENBERGER